

The names of Engrailed moths (Geometridae)

In the last issue Bob Palmer and Philip Gould (*antea* p. 153) refer briefly to a difference of opinion about the status of the Engrailed moth and the Small Engrailed moth.

When I have discussed this with Geometridae specialists they have acknowledged that in Britain and some other parts of northern Europe the taxon which is described in British literature as *Ectropis crepuscularia* (Denis & Schiffermüller), the Small Engrailed moth is different from the double brooded taxon known in British literature as *E. bistortata* (Goeze). However, in most of Continental Europe, only the one taxon occurs which is the commoner Engrailed moth.

The name *crepuscularia* was described from the Vienna district so this must be the same species which we in Britain have called *bistortata*. Denis & Schiffermüller's collection was destroyed by fire so there is no type specimen available. Goeze was mostly giving names to species described by others, so again there is no type specimen of *bistortata*, but since this was also from Continental Europe it is certain to be the same species. Continental authors are therefore correct in stating that *bistortata* (Goeze, 1783) is a junior synonym of *crepuscularia* (Denis & Schiffermüller, 1775).

If the taxon known in Britain as the Small Engrailed is a distinct species, then it needs a different scientific name. Mark Parsons and I went through all the names used in this species group, especially those described from Britain: *strigularia* Stephens, 1831 and *laricaria* Doubleday, 1847. It was clear that all refer to the same taxon, *crepuscularia*, the Engrailed moth, and should be listed in the synonymy of that species.

What is needed is a geometrid specialist to explore the case for specific status, using molecular methods if possible, and if the Small Engrailed moth is proven to be a good species a new scientific name should be used. Neither *crepuscularia* nor *bistortata* will be available.— DAVID J. L. AGASSIZ, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD.

Vanessa cardui (L.) (Lep.: Nymphalidae) reared from *Borago officinalis*

I had the opportunity of exploring the insects of some arable weed fields at West Pentire, Crantock (O.S. grid reference SW 7760) on 11.vii.2003. Sweep-netting amongst borage *Borago officinalis* and bugloss *Anchusa arvensis* produced a single caterpillar of *Vanessa cardui*. I kept it in a container with some *Borago* leaves and it ate its way through them fairly quickly, and did not feed on any of a wide range of alternative plant foliage provided. It pupated a few days later and the butterfly emerged by 1.viii.2003. Butterfly books often mention vipers bugloss *Echium vulgare* as an occasional foodplant, but I have found no mention of any other Boraginaceae.— KEITH N. A. ALEXANDER, 59 Sweetbrier Lane, Heavitree, Exeter EX1 3AQ.